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RICK ROSS'S NEWEST ALBUM, MASTERMIND, HIT NO. 1 ON THE BILLBOARD 200 AFTER ITS MARCH 3 RELEASE

PAGE 11

Going the way of the penny?

The bitcoin revolution may be coming to an end, so selling now could be a smart move PAGE 9

Crimea votes to leave Ukraine

While celebrations were held in the Crimean capital, the U.S., Canada and Europe condemned the ballot PAGE 8

Boards seek $1B more in school projects

Online. For a full breakdown of both boards' capital plans and an interactive map, head to metronews.ca

Calgary's public and Catholic school boards will lobby provincial officials for an additional $1 billion in capital projects over the next three years as they combat record student growth and attempt to retrofit aging facilities.

The requests, outlined in the organizations' 2015-18 capital plans, come on top of a series of announcements approving new projects dating back to last May.

"The advocacy and the needs never stop," said Mary Martin, trustee chair for the Calgary Catholic School District. "We have to anticipate where the growth is going to be and we have to work with our parent communities ... it's really important that our entire school community is working together. We don't want to see one community pitted against another because that becomes really destructive."

But some communities, namely those hoping to sit atop the Calgary Board of Education's capital plan, have made their voices heard loud and clear in recent months by hosting rallies, writing letters and meeting with provincial officials in hopes of keeping their little ones close to home in a nearby school.

Parents in the community of West Springs took a petition with nearly 5,000 signatures calling for a middle school to serve them and neighbours in Cougar Ridge and Aspen Woods to the legislature Thursday.

A leaked copy of the CBE's capital plan obtained by Metro indicates they're now ranked in the No. 1 position.

"It does validate everything that we've been saying," said West Springs mother Shannon Craven, when informed of the ranking Sunday. "We're absolutely thrilled — we feel like people are listening to us."

The provincial budget released earlier this month allocates just $1.2 billion to construct 50 new facilities and modernize 70 others that were already announced.

JEREMY NOLAIS/METRO

FOR MORE ON THE SCHOOL CAPITAL PLANS, HEAD TO PAGE 4

GREEN BEER AND GUINNESS

Pubs across Calgary are preparing for an onslaught of customers looking to celebrate St. Patrick's Day on Monday, with plenty of green beer and Guinness at the ready. Here, Cara Klein, left, and Josie Bajada show off some of the suds set to be served at Ceili's Modern Irish Pub's Southland location, where St. Paddy's Day is typically the busiest day of the year. ROBSON FLETCHER/METRO

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Leadership concerns

Premier grilled at Tory board meeting

Premier Alison Redford faced some tough questions at a party board meeting on Saturday, capping off what she admits has been a tough week.

But she and Progressive Conservative party president Jim McCormick emerged from the four-and-a-half-hour gathering showing a united front.

The "$45,000 question" was discussed, said McCormick, referring to the premier's costly trip to South Africa to attend Nelson Mandela's funeral.

Redford said no one at the meeting asked her to resign. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Anxiety in focus

Province to gauge psychological response to flood

The provincial government is hoping to get a better understanding of the mental scars that may not have entirely washed away in the wake of last year's flood.

The province recently closed bids on a project asking for a review of the $50 million invested in mental health last fall with the hopes of understanding whether the money did what they hoped.

Thalia Anderen with the Calgary Counselling Centre said anxiety can "start to pop back up" even months after the initial trauma.

"What it's now triggering in many of the flood-affected areas is this snow melting and flooding and we are getting closer to this one-year anniversary," she said.

RYAN TUMILTY/METRO IN EDMONTON

A still image of a controlled avalanche taken from a Parks Canada video recorded March 10 in Kootenay National Park. COURTESY PARKS CANADA

Father, son bring week's avalanche fatalities to 7

Know the risk. Officials urge backcountry users to check conditions at avalanche.ca before venturing out

ROBSON FLETCHER
robson.fletcher@metronews.ca

A 33-year-old father and his 11-year-old son were found dead Saturday beneath avalanche debris near Lake Louise, bringing the number of avalanche fatalities in the span of one week this season to seven — outpacing last season's entire total of five deaths.

"It's been a really horrible week," said Ilya Storm, a public avalanche warning service forecast co-ordinator with the Canadian Avalanche Centre.

The father and son, both from Quebec, had been reported missing late Friday night, after not checking in for their return flight to Montreal, RCMP Const. Phil Caza said.

The pair had rented a toboggan from the Chateau Lake Louise on March 9, and police believe the avalanche may have happened either March 9 or 10.

"It's hard to say," Caza said. "We've had a lot of avalanches in the last few weeks."

Members of Parks Canada's search-and-rescue team found the toboggan near a pile of avalanche debris at the base of Fairview Mountain on Saturday and, with the help of a dog, located and recovered the two bodies.

Caza said the boy and his father were not equipped with avalanche gear and had just been out for some "casual tobogganing."

Banff National Park resource conservation manager Bill Hunt said the site where their bodies were found is an "avalanche slope" and it appeared the pair "had no idea" of the risk.

Storm said casual backcountry users are occasionally killed in situations like this, and it's important for everyone who travels in avalanche terrain to be aware of the potential for slides.

"People want to go for a walk in the woods, they want to have a snowball fight, they want to make snow angels, and they're just totally unaware," he said. "And it's really sad."

WITH FILES FROM THE CANADIAN PRESS

Dangerous terrain

- Two other people — a man and a woman from Spain — were killed by an avalanche several kilometres away from Lake Louise, on the shore of Lake Agnes, on March 8.
- A backcountry skier was also airlifted to hospital in critical condition after being buried by an avalanche near Bow Lake on Saturday. Members of his group dug him out.

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Freezin' for a Reason fundraiser

Travis Juska of the Calgary Police Service leaps into the water at Arbour Lake as part of the annual Freezin' for a Reason fundraiser in support of the Law Enforcement Torch Run for the Special Olympics. Fortunately for this year's jumpers, the weather was a bit balmier compared to the -27 C temperature recorded during last year's event. Still, Juska said the water wasn't exactly warm. "It's a bit of a shock to the system, but once you're in, it's comfortable," he said. ROBSON FLETCHER/METRO

School needs greatest in city's outskirts

Wish list. Technology a top priority for public, Catholic boards

JEREMY NOLAIS
jeremy.nolais@metronews.ca

Even with a slate of new schools announced over the past 10 months for Calgary's developing communities, both the public and Catholic boards continue to call for more infrastructure as they anticipate sustained surges of students in the coming years.

The Calgary Board of Education has already been approved for 12 new schools since last May and the Calgary Catholic School District has been given the green light on five of its projects as well — officials hope to cut ribbons at all new sites by fall 2016.

But the CBE has already identified 10 more projects it hopes to see funded in Year 1 of its capital plan alone, followed by another 13 in Years 2 and 3.

The CCSD, meanwhile, hopes to establish seven new sites in Calgary as well as two more in Airdrie, which has been dealing with issues related to diminishing school space for years.

All told, the CBE is seeking $511 million in new-school projects up to 2018 while Catholic district planners' requests total around $188 million.

Eight more sites are being sought by the two boards collectively for communities in the deep south and another seven have been identified in the Calgary's far west.

There is also the hope of building six new schools in developing northeast neighbourhoods as well as five more in the northwest.

The CBE has also requested $52 million for a northern high school, but its location is unclear, at least according to a capital-plan master list provided to Metro.

The board is set to release its entire report around midday Monday, just a little over 24 hours before publicly elected trustees are expected to approve it. Parents have cried foul in recent weeks over the rigid timeline and questioned whether they can actually influence the document.

By comparison, the Catholic district published its plan Friday ahead of a Wednesday meeting.

"It comes down to time, right?" Silverado public-school parent Mike Bradshaw said Sunday. "Who's got the time to drop everything and go through this thing and translate it into English?"

CBE trustees have said they can't comment on the capital plan until it's made public, but could opt to amend the ranking during a meeting scheduled for Tuesday.

Quoted

"I think the province just has to step up and build the schools that are needed ... I think they have to take the politics out of education."

Mike Bradshaw, public-school parent in Silverado
An elementary school for the area sits No. 8 on the CBE capital plan

New schools

Top three new-school projects requested:

Calgary Board of Education

- **West Springs/Cougar Ridge Middle School** — Grades 5-9, $25 million
- **Southeast Calgary High School** — Grades 10-12, $52 million
- **Saddle Ridge** — K-4, $15 million

Calgary Catholic School District

- **Skyview Ranch** — Elementary/Junior High/CTS School, $23.4 million
- **Silverado Elementary/ Junior High/CTS School** — $23.4 million
- **Sherwood Elementary/ Junior High/CTS School** — $23.4 million

Will Alberta's tanning bed legislation ban youth?

Alberta is preparing tanning equipment legislation to be introduced this year that aims to help protect young people from skin cancer.

But it is not clear if the bill will ban people under 18 from using tanning beds, equipment that the World Health Organization has linked to cancer, including deadly melanoma.

Health Minister Fred Horne said the legislation is being developed and could be introduced this spring or in the fall. The final contents of the bill will depend on the political process.

"They will see it this year," Horne said. "We are obviously looking at (a ban) as a key option and I will be taking it through our decision-making process in government as fast as I can."

Except for Saskatchewan and Manitoba, all the other provinces ban young people from using indoor tanning equipment.

Saskatchewan leaves it up to individuals to decide what is best for them. Just last week it ruled out introducing a ban despite a presentation from the Canadian Cancer Society and the Canadian Dermatology Association about the health dangers.

Manitoba allows people under 18 to indoor tan if they have permission from a parent.

The Canadian Cancer Society said it fears Alberta may follow Manitoba's lead and introduce parental consent-type legislation.

"Our issue with parental consent is that it doesn't work. It is not shown to be an effective way to reduce a minor's use of tanning equipment," said Evie Eshpeter, a policy analyst with the society.

"Fundamentally, it is wrong to give a parent permission to expose their child to a known carcinogen." THE CANADIAN PRESS

A tanning bed is seen in this file photo. JONATHAN HAYWARD/THE CANADIAN PRESS

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Calgary Catholic schools.
Officials OK with budget

Calgary Catholic school officials say this year's provincial budget is "workable" and have identified a funding shortfall one-tenth the size of their peers in the public board.

Overall, the Calgary Catholic School District received nearly $460.4 million for the 2014-15 school year, a four-per-cent bump when compared to 2013-14. A financial report prepared for trustees in advance of a Wednesday board meeting indicates the board will need to close a $3-million gap in the months ahead.

By comparison, officials with the Calgary Board of Education said last week they were more than $31 million short on funds.

But Catholic trustee chair Mary Martin said there are still some outlying concerns, namely support for English Language Learners, which she said make up a rapidly growing portion of the district's student body.

"Who couldn't use more money? The sky's the limit really," Martin added. "We're confident that ... we can provide an outstanding program of education for our students."

JEREMY NOLAIS/METRO

Bird rescue site

Parrots killed en masse in fire

Roughly two dozen parrots died in a house fire in Calgary over the weekend.

Firefighters say they were called to the home at around noon on Saturday. Battalion Chief Al Magwood says a bird-rescue group was operating inside the home and that about 26 parrots died from the smoke.

Magwood says another six birds were brought to an emergency veterinarian.

"Everyone in the bird community is shaken up. There's been a lot of lives lost today," said Robin Horemans, a behaviour specialist with Birdline Parrot Rescue.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Minister seeks to streamline post-secondary applications

Advanced Education Minister Dave Hancock says improvements to the post-secondary student application process could open new doors for learners denied entry to their first institution of choice. JASON FRANSON/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Provincial review.
Hancock keen to open up access for as many students as possible

JEREMY NOLAIS
jeremy.nolais@metronews.ca

Courtney Pollock is confident she'll be honing her skills at the Alberta College of Art and Design this fall — but admits she has few fallback plans should the institution's top brass reject her application.

The prospective Calgary student is far from alone in submitting just a single application for higher learning. Data from fall 2012, the latest year available, indicates 68 per cent of incoming students applied to just a single program at a specific school, and those denied entrance did not end up in classes elsewhere, at least that year.

But as space becomes increasingly tight in popular institutions — the University of Calgary and Mount Royal University have reported turning away thousands of qualified applicants annually — Alberta's Advanced Education Minister Dave Hancock says he has eyes on a more streamlined process.

"We really want to improve our access.... The fear is, if (students) don't get in, where are they going?" Hancock said in an interview earlier this year.

Some of the ideas being explored include allowing a student to submit an identical application to multiple institutions as well as fostering more bridge programs between institutions.

The province also recently announced funding for an additional 2,000 student spaces in time for the 2014-15 school year and more than 6,000 spaces over the next four years.

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Michael Hornburg holds a photograph of his son Nate, who was the 71st Canadian soldier to die in Afghanistan, at his home in Calgary. JEFF MCINTOSH/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Families of fallen reflect on losses

At what price? Despite the investment of blood and treasure, the Afghanistan being left behind is far from peaceful and secure

Was it all worth it?

It is a brutally awkward question, especially when posed in the context of Afghanistan.

There is no shortage of people opining about the now-concluded military mission that morphed into a costly, bloody humanitarian exercise.

But few of those voices truly count as much as the ones who've stayed largely silent through the tempest of this war: the families of the fallen, some of whom are speaking up for the first time in a series of interviews with The Canadian Press.

As the last 100 soldiers rush into the warmth of home this week, these people will still have empty places at the dining room table and cling to the mementoes of lives inexorably cut short.

And although the scale of casualties from Afghanistan pales in comparison to the unmitigated slaughter of the First and Second World Wars, they say the grief and sense of loss is no less sharp.

There were 158 Canadian soldiers, one diplomat, one journalist and two civilian contractors who died over the dozen years Canada's military spent in both Kandahar and Kabul.

"While I support human rights all over the world, in many ways I don't understand why our Canadian Armed Forces would be there to stabilize Afghanistan," said Michael Hornburg of Calgary, who lost his son, 24-year-old Cpl. Nathan Hornburg.

"From what (Nathan) told us privately and said publicly, he wanted to go and provide a better way of life for women and girls," he said.

"He was always a very, very strong supporter in his life here in Calgary for the rights of women and girls, but I just don't know that was worth his life. You know? For a worthless ass piece of (the) Rigestan Desert."

THE CANADIAN PRESS

International hearing

Ottawa to argue against EU ban of seal products

An international trade organization will hear arguments from Ottawa on Monday in an appeal of a landmark ruling that upheld the European Union's ban on imported seal products.

Environment Minister Leona Aglukkaq said she will argue at the three-day World Trade Organization hearing in Geneva what the Tories have steadfastly defended: that the seal hunt is humane, sustainable and well-regulated.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Spy outfit. Investigation of CSEC reveals ethics breaches, wrongdoing

An investigation at Canada's secretive eavesdropping agency has uncovered misuse of public assets and "serious breaches" of the spy outfit's values and ethics code.

The findings, prompted by confidential information from a whistleblower, led Communications Security Establishment Canada to revise policy, improve training and boost oversight.

However, CSEC will say little more about the episode, leading opposition MPs to accuse the spy agency of needless secrecy as it comes under intense scrutiny due to widely publicized leaks by former American intelligence contractor Edward Snowden. THE CANADIAN PRESS

John Forster, chief of CSEC
THE CANADIAN PRESS FILE

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Crimea votes overwhelmingly to leave Ukraine, join Russia

Over 95 per cent approve. U.S., Europe condemn referendum as illegal, while Kyiv derides it as a 'circus'

Fireworks exploded and Russian flags fluttered above jubilant crowds Sunday after residents in Crimea decided to secede from Ukraine and become part of Russia. The U.S. and Europe condemned the ballot as illegal and destabilizing and were expected to slap sanctions against Russia for it.

Ukraine's new government in Kyiv called the referendum a "circus" directed at gunpoint by Moscow — referring to the Russian troops now in the strategic Black Sea peninsula after seizing it two weeks ago.

But after the polls closed, crowds of ethnic Russians in the Crimean capital of Simferopol erupted with chants, overjoyed at the prospect of once again becoming part of Russia.

The referendum offered voters the choice of seeking annexation or remaining in Ukraine with greater autonomy. After 50 per cent of the ballots were counted, Mikhail Malishev, head of the referendum committee, said more than 95 per cent of voters had approved splitting off and joining Russia.

Opponents of secession appeared to have stayed away Sunday, denouncing the vote as a cynical power play.

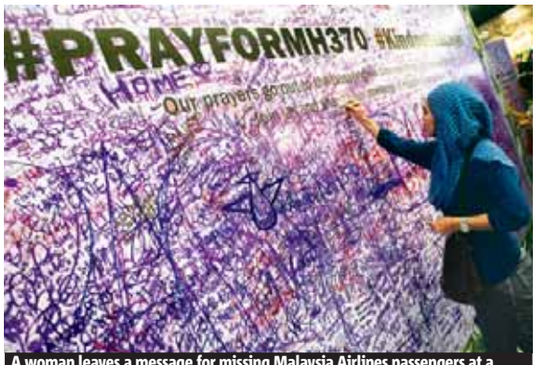
The Crimean parliament was to meet Monday to formally ask Moscow to be annexed and Crimean lawmakers will fly to Moscow later in the day for talks, Crimea's pro-Russia prime minister said on Twitter.

Ethnic Ukrainians interviewed said they refused to take part in the referendum, calling it an illegal charade stage-managed by Moscow. Some said they were scared of the potential for widespread harassment.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Pro-Russian people celebrate in Lenin Square in Simferopol, Ukraine, Sunday, after residents in Crimea voted overwhelmingly to secede from Ukraine and join Russia. VADIM GHIRDA/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Plane's disappearance may have been intentional



A woman leaves a message for missing Malaysia Airlines passengers at a shopping mall in Petaling Jaya, Malaysia, Sunday. LAI SENG SIN/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

The final words from the missing Malaysian jetliner's cockpit gave no indication anything was wrong, even though one of the plane's communications systems had already been disabled, officials said Sunday, adding to suspicions that one or both of the pilots were involved in the disappearance.

Authorities also examined a flight simulator confiscated from the home of one of the pilots and dug through the background of all 239 people on board, as well as the ground crew that serviced the plane.

The Malaysia Airlines Boeing 777 took off from Kuala Lumpur in the wee hours of March 8, headed to Beijing. On Saturday, the Malaysian government announced findings that strongly suggested the plane was deliberately diverted and may have flown as far north as Central Asia or south into the reaches of the Indian Ocean.

Investigators have said someone on board the plane first disabled one of its communications systems — the Aircraft and Communications Addressing and Reporting System (ACARS) — about 40 minutes after takeoff. Around 14 minutes later, the transponder that identifies the plane to commercial radar systems was also shut down. The fact that both systems went dark separately offered strong evidence the disappearance was deliberate.

On Sunday, Malaysian Defence Minister Hishammuddin Hussein told a news conference that the final, reassuring words from the cockpit — "All right, good night" — were spoken to air traffic controllers after the ACARS system was shut off. Whoever spoke did not mention any trouble on board.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

'Highly complex' search

The search area now includes 11 countries the plane might have flown over, Hishammuddin said, adding that the number of countries involved in the operation had increased from 14 to 25.

- "The search was already a highly complex, multinational effort," he said. "It has now become even more difficult."

Harlem

Congregation mourns members' deaths in blast

As workers tried to clear away the last of the rubble that once was two New York City apartment buildings, a pair of congregations gathered to mourn Sunday — one for its lost church and one for two members who lost their lives in the massive explosion.

At Bethel Gospel Assembly, tears mixed with the sounds of gospel music as the church remembered Griselde Camacho and Carmen Tanco, two of the eight people killed in the massive East Harlem explosion that levelled a pair of five-storey buildings on Wednesday.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

N.Y. Mayor Bill de Blasio, left, and Al Sharpton at Bethel Gospel Assembly Sunday. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Jeffrey Sinclair

U.S. general to avoid sex-assault charges with plea

Defence attorneys say an U.S. Army general has agreed to a plea deal that includes the dropping of sexual-assault charges against him.

A news release Sunday from lawyers representing Brig. Gen. Jeffrey Sinclair says that he will plead to lesser charges in exchange for having the sexual-assault charges dropped along with two others that might have required Sinclair to register as a sex offender.

The release says a high-ranking general overseeing the case has approved and signed the agreement.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Sweden

Thousands rally against fascism

Thousands have protested fascism in Sweden, calling for dialogue and tolerance.

The demonstration happened in Malmo where, a week earlier, four people were injured in a fight at a feminist demonstration.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Stick a fork in bitcoin, it's done?

HOW TO ROLL
Alison Griffiths
metronews.ca

Is the bitcoin revolution just one more doomed universal currency idea? Judging by the recent spate of thefts, frauds and swindles connected to bitcoin exchanges, the answer seems to be yes.

If you got in at $30 US three years ago and hung on past the 2013 $1,250 US peak to today's price at around $650 US, you've still done nicely. Hint! Selling now might be a really, really good move.

Because transactions among private parties, merchants, as well as with bitcoin exchanges are unregulated, the statistics about "investment" in and spending of this cybercurrency is anyone's guess.

However, economic behavior study tells us that regular investors jump on hot trends too late and jump off long after the big boys and girls have pocketed their profits.

So, for all those who bought into bitcoins late, is there still hope? There might be. Just last week two major players, Perseus Telecom and Atlas ATS, teamed up in an attempt to bring some sanity and regulation to the cybercurrency world.

Perseus connects stock markets and other security exchanges with big institutional investors' trading platforms. Year-old Atlas operates a digital currency exchange providing "two-factor authentication, cold storage of crypto currency, multi-tiered multi-firewall architecture." Cold storage for currency? OK, moving on.

Both firms promise to bring security, regulation and liquidity to the bitcoin world. Right now digital currency is housed in the world of cloud computing, making it highly vulnerable to hackers. And with every theft or hint of scandal, bitcoin prices take a wild ride making it almost useless for spending and leaving it in the realm of speculators.

Cybercurrency graveyard

- **OS-Gold, Standard Reserve, INYGold, e-gold, 1mdc, e-Bullion (digital gold currencies.** 1996-2004 (all were fraudulent)
- **DigiCash.** 1990-1998
- **CyberCash.** 1994-2001
- **Beenz.** 1998-2001
- **Flooz.** 1999-2001
- **Internetcash.com.** 1999-2001
- **QQ coins.** 2000-2002
- **Linden Dollars.** 2008
- **Bitcoins.** 2009 - ????

Sap-rilege: Cold may mean less nectar of the gods this season

Paul Boulanger tosses wood in to fire up the sap evaporator at the Turtle Lane Maple sugar house in North Andover, Mass., last week. Maple syrup season is finally underway in Massachusetts after getting off to a slow start because of unusually cold weather. The season starts at the end of February in a typical year. But despite being well into March, temperatures have been too low for the sap to drip out. Many farms have yet to start tapping their trees, said Winton Pitcoff, co-ordinator for the Massachusetts Maple Production Association. But it's too soon to say whether the late start will affect the overall maple season, which ends in April, Pitcoff said. ELISE AMENDOLA/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Bank of Canada

Worries of disinflation gaining steam

Does Canada still have a too-low inflation problem?

This Friday's inflation reading for February has some economists predicting the Statistics Canada report will show the annual consumer price index falling below one per cent.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Riddle me this...

Is a blimp a blimp if it has a semi-rigid skeleton?

The next generation of the Goodyear blimp is getting ready to take flight as the company moves toward replacing its old fleet of airships with a new trio.

The new airship has a semi-rigid internal skeleton, a feature that wasn't present in earlier models and raises questions about whether it is truly a blimp.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

ICANN

U.S. letting go of hold on Internet address system

The U.S. government is relinquishing its control of the Internet's address system in a shift that may raise questions about the future direction of online innovation and communications.

The decision announced Friday begins a long-planned transition affecting the stewardship of the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers, or ICANN. That's a not-for-profit agency launched in 1998 by the U.S. Commerce Department to govern the system that assigns website addresses and directs Internet traffic.

Although other countries have had a say in how the Internet is run, the U.S. government retained veto power over ICANN.

The Commerce Department hopes to end its ICANN oversight by the time its contract expires in September 2015.

Proposals for a new ICANN stewardship will be accepted beginning next week at a conference in Singapore.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Taken off around globe. Commercial drones grounded in U.S., for now

A drone landing after flying over the scene of an explosion in East Harlem in New York last week. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE

The U.S. government bars commercial use of drones, no matter how seemingly benign.

But already, photographers, real estate agents, moviemakers and others are hurrying to embrace the technology.

The use of commercial drones is starting to spread to countries where authorities have decided the aircraft presents little threat if operators follow a few safety rules.

U.S. officials say rules to address the special safety challenges associated with unmanned aircraft need to be in place before they can share the sky with manned aircraft.

But final rules could be years away for small drones, which are defined as those weighing less than 55 pounds.

The drone industry and some lawmakers worry that the United States will be one of the last countries to gain the economic benefits of the technology.

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URBAN COMPASS

Jeremy Klaszus
calgary@metronews.ca

If you're feeling happier today than you felt a month ago, read on for one explanation.

At long last, Calgarians have emerged from winter hibernation. As the sun blasts heaps of snow into pools of meltwater, people of all ages have spilled onto sidewalks, front lawns and pub patios.

With rising temperatures, the city feels more alive, more invigorating. As I write this, I can hear the neighbour kids hollering outside. It's a welcome sound: the first notes of springtime. A reminder that life on the Canadian prairie can thrive after all. One forgets!

That's enough to make anyone happier. However, there is another, more specific explanation for our collective cheer.

As we step outside, our network of casual community connections is being renewed. And these informal encounters contribute to happiness.

Vancouver writer Charles Montgomery makes this point in his excellent new book Happy City: Transforming Our Lives Through Urban Design, which is essential reading for anyone interested in cities.

Montgomery suggests that some of our most important interactions aren't with close friends and family, but with people who are in the "blurry zone … not quite strangers, but not quite friends."

In other words, the neighbour you haven't seen all winter. The barista you see every morning, but whose name you don't know. The jogger whom you recognize and who recognizes you, but have never said anything more than "hi" to.

Studies show these encounters are more meaningful than they seem. "The uncomfortable truth is, our spouses and children and co-workers can wear us out," writes Montgomery. "Life's lighter, breezier relationships soothe and reassure us, specifically because of their lightness."

If you are an introverted type, this is a liberating — though not altogether surprising — bit of insight. You don't need to have everyone over for dinner. You don't need close relationships with all your neighbours to have a strong community. "The richest social environments are those in which we feel free to edge closer together or move apart as we wish," writes Montgomery.

Unfortunately, many of these life-giving encounters occur in spite of, not because of, our current urban form. North American cities have largely been designed for the nuclear family — a "terrible mistake," Montgomery writes, because it comes at the expense of other casual yet important social ties (I recommend picking up Montgomery's book for more on this).

No wonder young people flock to neighbourhoods like the Beltline, where they can cultivate a range of social relationships with varying degrees of intensity. As humans, we crave this, and many of our neighbourhoods don't deliver.

Still, we make do where we can. We flock to patios, say "hello" over the backyard fence and make idle conversation about the weather with people we recognize but don't know.

And this could be why you're happier today than you were when the city was frozen stiff.

ZOOM

The Great Wall of Patagonia

FRANK THIEL/SEAN KELLY GALLERY

Towering glacier in all its majesty

The monumental beauty of Patagonia's grandest glacier is portrayed in a series of photos by German artist Frank Thiel. Shooting from boats in choppy waters, Thiel has captured both the majesty and fragility of the Perito Moreno Glacier in southern Argentina. His work is now on display at the Sean Kelly Gallery in New York.

METRO WORLD NEWS

Q&A

'Magical and fragile'

FRANK THIEL
Photographer, 47, based in Berlin

What does your powerful photograph tell us?
It says that nature is the greatest artist alive. With my photo I want to show the glaciers' physical forms and their endless variations of blues, whites and greys in unknown detail. The picture celebrates a beauty that's both magical and fragile.... Seeing a glacier calving into the water is beautiful. But it is a very contradictory kind of beauty that one cannot purely enjoy it because you know that the glacier is kind of dying.

This place looks surreal ...
But it is very real — ice up to tens of thousands of years old. But what is unnerving is knowing that it's not part of our collective treasure trove of human experience and is older than any living creature on our planet.

What was it like to work in such an environment?
Reliable weather forecasts do not exist out there so you're in the middle of nature. The Andes creates extremely unpredictable micro-climates. And the glaciers almost function like gigantic wind tunnels as the air above the ice is colder and faster than elsewhere.

ANTHONY JOHNSTON/MWN

Clickbait

ANDREW FIFIELD
andrew.fifield@metronews.ca

A lot of our favourite podcasts are still going strong in 2014, including one that has returned from an unwelcome (to us, anyway) break. Subscribe to these shows in iTunes for a steady supply of laughs and wisdom.

Stuff You Should Know:
Short, in-depth lessons on the history or mechanics of a staggering variety of topics. The Spanish Inquisition? Check. Jack the Ripper? Why not? Pet psychics? You bet. An endlessly fascinating array of anecdotes and info to keep you sounding smart at parties for months to come.

The Fogelnest Files:
Part comedy show, part permanent tangent into pop-culture history with very funny people you've probably never heard of. From lengthy treatises on punk music to a spotlight on the joke factories that make up "Weird Twitter," Jake Fogelnest has his finger on many pulses.

Adjust Your Tracking:
An excellent ongoing discussion about film and TV, including trends, new releases and interviews with guests who love the stuff as much as the hosts do.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Twitter

@metropicks asked: What do you think of dress codes in the workplace? Good or bad idea and why?

@alicyaperreault: If u are working for me u are representing my company & I would expect your attire to reflect professionalism. No yoga pants!

@starrydays17: what is more important, how I look, or what I accomplish? Dress codes emphasize the former.

@Craig_F: I think they're a great idea saves me so much time in figuring out it's a company not worth doing business with

@sadie_simo: Necessary to look professional. Even if you're miserable; dress for the job you want, not the job you have!

Follow @metropicks and take part in our daily poll.

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Ebooks

Captain America: The Winter Soldier

By. Ed Brubaker/ Marvel Unlimited

iPad/iPhone/Android

MIND THE APP
Kris Abel
@RealKrisAbel
scene@metronews.ca

A new concept for digital comics, adaptive audio is a music soundtrack that changes tempo to match your speed in turning pages. Added sound effects are triggered by panels and the result is that scenes with text build in anticipation while fights move with intensity. It's your narrative, because there are no voices, so your imagination remains in control.

Winter is coming

Game of Thrones' creators say they can predict the (unwritten) future

The hit Game of Thrones TV series is only reaching its halfway point, but it seems the end is becoming clear. Or at least clearer.

In an interview with Vanity Fair, show co-creators David Benioff and Dan Weiss say they've consulted with George R. R. Martin — author of A Song of Ice and Fire, the series of novels on which the show is based — so they have a pretty good idea of how the story will eventually end. But they can't be entirely sure because Martin hasn't finished writing the last two books in the series.

Still, they're now convinced the TV series will only run for three or four seasons more and they've got a plan to get there.

"For most of the major characters, we know the vicinity of where they're headed, for the most part. And it's just the idea of it barrelling toward some conclusion as opposed to just rolling down the road," Weiss says. **THE CANADIAN PRESS**

Rick Ross talks staying on top ... and staying alive

Mastermind. As his new album rules the charts, the rapper reveals how a 2013 drive-by shooting changed his take on life

Rick Ross' Mastermind LP shot to No.1 on the Billboard 200 after being released March 3. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE

Rick Ross still gets excited by No. 1 albums, but as he celebrates his fifth he takes satisfaction in different ways.

Ross marked the ascendance of Mastermind on Saturday night during South by Southwest, drawing one of the week's larger crowds in Austin during the annual music conference and festival.

"You know what, when this is what you centre everything around, you just want the best, not only for yourself, but for your team, everybody you build with," Ross said.

"I not only want a No. 1 for me but for all the new-time dudes who've never been on a No. 1 album."

It's been quite the run for Ross. Five of his six major-label albums started out atop the Billboard 200, moving him into rare company. The magazine says among rappers only Jay Z (13), Eminem (seven), Nas and Kanye West (six apiece) have had more and he's now tied with Tupac Shakur and DMX.

Ross attributes the run to remembering where he got his start.

"Regardless of the success I see, I still go back to my foundation … that made me," he said as he stood shirtless in his dressing room tent following a performance at Fader Fort.

"Yesterday, after being out on promo for two months, I took a day out of my schedule to go to the smaller markets in South Carolina, the Columbias, you know the (places) that don't get attention. But those are the places where I remember making my first $5,000 shows from, so I still go to those places."

Quoted

"Rule No. 1 in the handbook I studied is never let the game kill you."

Rick Ross
on facing violence in his life

The 38-year-old Miami rapper played new material for fans and showed his mind's been on mortality since he survived a January 2013 drive-by shooting in Fort Lauderdale. He told the crowd it was important to remember the rappers who have died too early like Shakur, The Notorious B.I.G. and Pimp C before launching into Nobody, a song with the chilling French Montana vocal hook "you're nobody till somebody kills you."

The song is paired back to back on Mastermind with Shots Fired, a series of news clips recounting the attack.

"You know it's unfortunate, it's nothing to glorify," Ross said. "Where I come from in my city — I come from Carol City in Miami — they've renamed it the Miami Gardens, you know, and they done dubbed it the Murder Gardens, and it's unfortunate. But those are conditions we were unfortunately seeing coming up. So me being in the position I am, that's what come with that. So Rule No. 1 in the handbook I studied is never let the game kill you."

Ross says the experience has caused him to look at life through a new filter. Not long after the near miss he put on Biggie Smalls' Ready to Die.

"I just listen to it in a different light," Ross said. "It's jacked up, but that's what come with this.... You're never indestructible, but what you do is if you have certain feelings you want to express, you express your feelings. I'll continue to do that till the day I die." **THE ASSOCIATED PRESS**

Lil Wayne says Tha Carter V will be last solo effort

Lil Wayne said during an appearance at South by Southwest that he plans to make Tha Carter V his last solo album and that the first single from the still-in-progress LP will be out in the next week.

"I'm approaching it like it is my last project, and I think that's why it's a lot different than everything else," Wayne said.

Tha Carter V is one of the most anticipated albums of the year. Tha Carter IV sold nearly one million albums the first week of its release in 2011.

Wayne, 31, said he's been taking his time with the album, trying to diversify his subject matter after interviewer Elliott Wilson joked that most of his songs centre around one thing: sex.

"What you want me to talk about? The world?" he said, drawing laughter from the audience.

Wayne said he once wanted to be known as the greatest rapper in the world, but has softened his stance with age and perspective. Of Kendrick Lamar, he said, "Ain't nobody touch that dude."

Quoted

"I'm working harder. I'm approaching it a whole lot different. I'm approaching it as if you don't have tomorrow."

Lil Wayne
on completing Tha Carter V

And he praised the artists on his own Young Money label. He called Drake "a wonderful person" and said Nicki Minaj is not just the best female rapper out there, but the best rapper.

Wayne also said the jail journal full of notes he took during his stay at Rikers Island in New York on gun charges is being turned into a book.

Asked about his legacy as he nears his self-imposed retirement at the age of 33, he said he'd prefer folks to think of him as a beloved figure.

"I would just say I'd like to be remembered as a good spirit, a good soul, like a Willie Nelson ... like a Snoop Dogg," Wayne said. **THE ASSOCIATED PRESS**

Gorillaz hip hop alums join Damon Albarn during SXSW performance

Austin. Gorillaz mastermind pulls out all the stops including De La Soul, Del The Funky Homosapien and even Snoop Dogg

Damon Albarn (right) performs during the SXSW Music Festival on March 14 in Austin, Texas. JACK PLUNKETT/INVISION/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

For a guy who got his start in the '90s British rock 'n' roll scene, Damon Albarn sure knows how to throw a hip-hop party.

Albarn invited De La Soul and Del The Funky Homosapien to join him during his performance Friday night at South By Southwest, pulling off one of the bigger surprises so far at the annual music conference and festival.

De La Soul joined Albarn for their Gorillaz collaboration Feed Good Inc., before Del came on stage to perform the initial Gorillaz single Clint Eastwood for the first time since its release 13 years ago.

"What can I say about them? They're very dear friends of mine," Albarn said of De La Soul before the performance. "But it's Del The Funky Homosapien I'm most excited about. It is literally the first time that not only have I met him, but he's going to sing Clint Eastwood. It's actually quite a momentous moment."

And not just for Albarn, who also debuted songs from his new solo album Everyday Robots, out April 29. Those who bothered to stick around after De La Soul's high-spirited appearance got a double surprise as Snoop Dogg took the stage at the Fader Fort to contribute a surprise verse as well. Albarn said Snoop's appearance was meant to add "a little cayenne" to the set.

Albarn's music has increasingly featured hip-hop and bass-inflected electronic music, and he says he finds inspiration working with diverse artists from different musical worlds.

"I'm more of a fan of making it than listening to it," Albarn said of hip-hop. "I've got my favourites, A Tribe Called Quest and De La Soul, and I suppose that first wave really. Mind you, I love Kendrick Lamar. That sort of excited me again. Of course I love hip-hop but I'm not hip hop. It's another aspect of the spectrum that I kind of can hear the spirit of music in."

Dave Jolicoeur of De La Soul said Albarn's open-mindedness has led to a great friendship.

"He's a cool dude who just likes to have fun and create music," Jolicoeur said of the Blur frontman. "For us, that's been our MO ever since Day 1, goofing around, having a good time. There's no real rules at all, but hopefully we get something out of this. That's been the person that I've known, a guy who just likes to create. There are no embarrassing moments where you say, 'You can't do that, you can't say that.' Just do what you're doing, and be free." THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Quoted

"He's a cool dude who just likes to have fun and create music."

Dave Jolicoeur of De La Soul
on working with Damon Albarn

Kwanten happy to take Wrong path

Rom-com. Australian True Blood star is not a big fan of the genre but couldn't resist playing the character after reading the script

NED EHRBAR
Metro World News in Hollywood

When not playing Jason Stackhouse on True Blood, Ryan Kwanten has looked to build up his film resumé with dark, complex roles, like the Australian films Red Hill and Mystery Road. So no one was more surprised than he was when he responded so strongly to the romantic comedy the Right Kind of Wrong. Of course, it doesn't help that even in this he takes a hell of a beating. Ryan found time to tell Metro a bit about the role.

Ryan Kwanten (Leo) and Catherine O'Hara (Tess) attend her daughter's wedding in The Right Kind of Wrong. SABRINA LANTOS

This role is a bit of departure for you.
I must admit I'm not a huge rom-com guy. I'm much more of a 'let's break down the psyche.' Give me a character that you have to keep knocking down. Let's see the fragments of a man and see him put himself back together. But this was that in a rom-com, and I've never really experienced that before. Reading it, every time I expected it to go into that typical, clichéd ending of an act or a scene, it totally twisted in a way I wasn't expecting, then it would do the same again to the point that I was like, 'OK, I'm going to stop predicting anything here because obviously I'm none for 20 right now.'"

If you recast this movie with, say, Paul Giamatti, it becomes a really creepy story.
Yes (laughs), that was a concern too. It was a concern of mine, but (director) Jeremiah (Chechik) said, "Don't you worry about that." I guess he was insinuating that certain qualities that I may have will ultimately exude through and hopefully win the audience over. This is a guy that's obnoxious, he's self-centered, very rarely listens to anyone; in fact doesn't, really. He's sort of a professional dreamer to the point where he will put down everything else in his life to achieve that goal. And that's something that, from many people's perspectives, can be a little too much. Like, 'Who the hell do you think you are?'"

Part of what makes it work is that it's clear that hasn't been working for him.
Yeah, he's sort of flawlessly flawed in a way. It's interesting, he learns lessons along the way, but it's only in retrospect now that I think about it that he doesn't really have an arc. He learns lessons, but he doesn't essentially change. I think that's such an endearing quality in someone, to be so … not necessarily righteous, but so full of belief.

On the most recent season of True Blood, I've never been more worried about your character's safety.
Yeah, I think every season a certain character gets picked out and looks like they are on the chopping block for that year. I felt like it was sort of right this season that we did lose one of our main cast. I guess since really episode 3 of the first season when we lost Gran, that to me was a huge thing where, from an audience perspective, you think, 'well if they can kill the sweet old granny they can kill anyone.'"

And next season will be the last one, they just announced.
Yeah. Look, the amount of things that have to fall into place for a series to get picked up for a pilot, let alone run seven years, I feel beyond grateful. It's ridiculous.

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METRO DISH

OUR TAKE ON THE WORLD OF CELEBRITIES

Pop goes the week

The artist formerly known as Ke$ha?

STARGAZING
Malene Arpe
scene@metronews.ca

After leaving rehab, Ke$ha changes her Twitter name to Kesha. "Waste not, want not," says Kim Karda$hian.

Prince William and Kate are facing criticism over leaving their infant son at home and flying away on vacation. Not complaining: everyone else on the plane.

Benedict Cumberbatch says that he is "so ready to play a really dumb character." "You stay away from my work, you Brit you," says Adam Sandler.

Miley Cyrus missed a costume change during a concert and had to return to the stage in her underwear. "It was surprising and something we all noticed," said no one in the audience.

Diogo Morgado, who plays Jesus in the movie Son of God, will reportedly next play the devil on the TV show The Messengers. And then, when he's done with all the major roles in Christianity he has his sight set on young, muscular Buddha.

Justin Bieber and Selena Gomez are back together after Justin reportedly sent Selena $10,000 worth of flowers. However, insiders also say that she was very impressed with how hot and masculine he was when he viciously bullied a court reporter at his recent deposition.

A friend sneaks vodka into Katy Perry's kale juice. That sounds like the best idea since not drinking kale juice.

Tyler, the Creator

ALL PHOTOS GETTY IMAGES

Rapper pushes fans to be pushy, Texas police push back

Call him Tyler, the Creator of safety hazards? The Odd Future rapper had a busy weekend, playing a sold-out show in Dallas just hours after being released from jail in connection with a misdemeanour charge of inciting a riot.

He was arrested at Austin-Bergstrom Airport on Saturday and released later that day after securing a $25,000 US bond. Police say the 23-year-old Los Angeles resident incited a large crowd of fans to push their way past venue employees controlling access to an unofficial South by Southwest day party that was already at full capacity. Officers who were at the scene said in a warrant that Tyler yelled for fans to push their way inside twice, and that a bartender had to protect a woman from injury in the resulting push.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Johnny Depp and Amber Heard

Looks like it's official for Johnny and Amber

Former Rum Diary co-stars Johnny Depp and Amber Heard are set to tie the knot, and they made their intentions clear Friday night with a big engagement party for friends and family in downtown Los Angeles, according to Radar Online.

Among the 100 guests were Mandy Moore, Jerry Bruckheimer, Marilyn Manson, and Aerosmith front man Steven Tyler, as well as Depp's 11-year-old son, Jack, and mother, Betty Sue. Depp and Heard are expected to marry sometime this summer, sources say.

9 nifty ways to save, plus a tip

Finding the money. Ideas from banking a raise to stashing your coins can grow your savings fast

GAIL VAZ-OXLADE
Gail blogs daily at gailvazoxlade.com

Latte go of a bad habit: Give up one caffeine hit a day and tuck the three bucks into your Good Habit jar instead. ISTOCK

People often tell me they can't find the money to save. Really? Not even $1 a week? I don't believe you. I think if you put your mind to it, if you really, really want to save, you can. Here are some tips:

1. Get started

I don't care if you use an envelope, a coffee can or an old jam jar. Pick an amount and stick it in your container every single week. Whether it's two dollars or ten, the trick is to do it religiously, never count it and don't spend it. EVER. Under no circumstances. You may have to hide it from everyone else so they aren't tempted to dip into your stash of cash.

2. Live on your pre-raise income

If you get a cost-of-living increase or a performance raise, pretend you didn't and save the extra money you're bringing home each pay.

3. Implement a fast-food tax

Like to hit the fast-food outlets or drive-through windows? Keep a container in your car and every time you pick up a coffee, grab a burger or hoe through a muffin, drop a buck in your bag. If you can find the money for the coffee, you can find the money to save too.

4. Reallocate

Just paid off a big bill like your car payment or credit card balance? Assuming you're out of the hole, add half the bill amount back into your budget and save the other half. You're already used to living without that money, so save some.

5. Put away your "savings"

This is one of the things that drives me crazy! People tell me how much they saved on sales, using coupons, or just by being a smart shopper. When I say, "So where are those savings?" they look at me with a dazed expression. Then they laugh and shake their heads. Hey, it's nothing to laugh about. If you just saved $6 at the grocery store by being a savvy shopper, take that $6 and stick it in your savings container at home. If you don't, you'll just spend it somewhere else and then you won't have saved anything.

6. Reward yourself

If you have the discipline to use a credit card and then pay off your balance every month, use a card that gives you cash back or a useful reward. Some credit cards earn grocery money. Some give you points you can use to cash in for rewards. Some give you cash back. Put those benefits to use to grow your savings.

7. Stash your coins

I know lots of people who use a change jar to save for a holiday. I don't consider this savings. Since you're going to spend the money, it's actually "planned spending." But if it's money you're not going to carry as a balance on your credit card, I'm all for it. If you don't have an emergency fund, saving your coins is a great way to get one started. And if you super-charge your change jar by dropping in a fiver at the end of every week, you won't believe how fast that money grows.

8. Swap a bad habit for a good one

Love candy? Can't walk by the coffee shop without dropping $3 for a caffeine boost? Smoke, drink pop or booze, or chew gum? Start giving up your bad habit slowly, and reward yourself with a good one as you do. Go from smoking 20 cigs a day to 15, and drop the 20¢ you didn't send up in smoke into your Good Habit jar. Walk past the coffee shop just once and you can add another $3 to your Good Habit jar.

9. Cut your communications bill

Here is one area where people routinely overspend: telephone, cell phone, cable, Internet. Cut your bill by $10 a month and now you have enough to start a savings plan. Cut it by $30 and you're three times smarter.

Tip: Saving is only saving if you take the money and stash it away for the future. So the next time you save money by cutting your spending, using a coupon or negotiating a deal, take your savings and actually save it by putting it in a TFSA, RRSP, RESP or high interest savings account. If you can't see it, you didn't really save it.

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Tax Talk

Need Advice?

Caroline Battista
Tax Analyst at H&R Block

H&R BLOCK

New homeowners: here's what to claim, but don't forget to repay RRSP amounts

Q I just bought my first home. What can I claim?

A I hope you are enjoying your new place. You should be able to claim the First Time Homebuyers Credit, which means about $750 in tax savings. There is no particular slip but you must be able to prove to the CRA that you bought a house in 2013. This could be the bill from your lawyer or closing papers. Unlike our U.S. neighbours who can claim mortgage interest, the tax benefits for Canadian homeowners comes when you sell. Any profit you make on the sale of your home is tax free. But you have to wait for the payoff. There is no annual benefit you can claim.

Q I borrowed money from my RRSP to buy my first home, but I forgot to make the first re-payment. Can I just double up my payment this year?

A Congrats on your new place. Under the Home Buyers Plan, you start making re-payments in the second year after you borrow the funds. Unfortunately, you can't miss payments. If you didn't deposit money back into your RRSP to cover the repayment last year, the CRA considers the amount income and it is added to your tax return. Check your Notice of Assessment for your re-payment amount and make sure you don't miss it this year.

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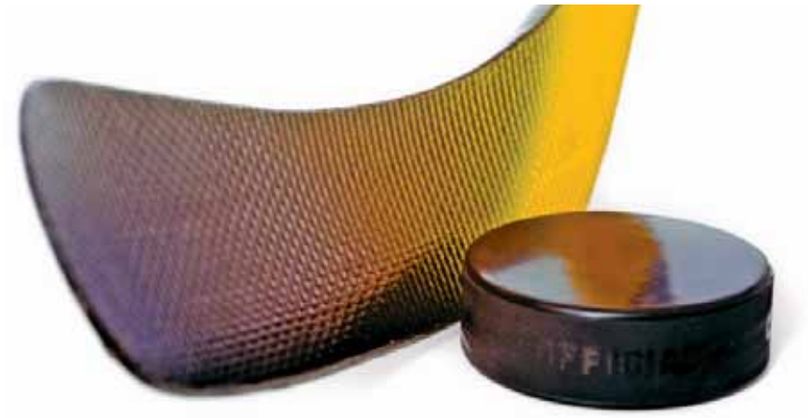
Money 101. Two couples, one year to make them richer

Sporting healthy financial gains

Wondering what it's going to take to make you wealthier? A combination of debt reduction, asset growth, frugal living and dedication to a savvy financial plan will do the trick. So far, this recipe has produced stellar results for the two couples I am offering financial advice to this year. Since January, Anne-Marie and Peter have improved their net worth by $4,000, while Carolina and Jose have improved theirs by $1,200. – Lesley-Anne Scorgie/For Metro



Small rewards for saving may include buying a new hockey stick. MIKE FLIPPO/SHUTTERSTOCK

Allocate money for small indulgences from time to time. WAVEBREAKMEDIA/SHUTTERSTOCK

Anne-Marie and Peter

LESLEY-ANNE SCORGIE
For Metro

Anne-Marie and Peter recap

- Location: Toronto
- Ages: 36 and 33
- Occupations: Broadcasting and sports editing
- Total household income: $110,000
- Life stage: Expecting their first child in June 2014
- Financial savvy: Medium — they use budgets to help guide spending, have some retirement savings, and are committed to paying off debt
- Top goals for 2014: Pay off debt, start a savings program for child's education and down payment on first home
- Homework from last month: Open tax-free savings account, make an extra RRSP contribution before March 3, and meet with a professional tax adviser

Anne-Marie and Peter rocked their homework assignments this month. After meeting with a tax adviser, the couple made additional RRSP contributions of $500 each before the March 3 RRSP deadline, which counts toward their 2013 taxes.

That RRSP money came from the debt repayment portion of their monthly budget. So, to get back on track with their debt repayment schedule, Anne-Marie and Peter will use a portion of their expected tax refund to pay off debt.

Saving for an emergency has also become top of mind for Anne-Marie and Peter. Though no one likes to think of a disaster, it's financially prudent to do so, especially when children are involved.

The couple plans to start building their emergency fund through regular monthly contributions to their tax-free savings account (TFSA). This translates into scaling down their debt repayment plan; rather than $1,000 each month, they will pay $800 on debt and put $200 into their TFSA.

As part of their homework, Anne-Marie and Peter will come up with a plan for their expected tax return, with debt repayment being their highest priority, followed by building their emergency fund, and saving a portion for small rewards for themselves (a hockey stick for Peter and a dinner out with her gal pals for Anne-Marie).

When I meet with Anne-Marie and Peter in Toronto this week, I will be examining Anne-Marie's pension statements, their RRSP investments, and offering guidance about what questions to ask their investment adviser to ensure they are invested in the right assets.

We will also be reviewing three ways that Anne-Marie and Peter could save for a down payment for a home.

The first way is not to save at all and instead ask for a gift or loan from a family member. Second is to use the RRSP Home Buyers' Plan (where you borrow money from your RRSP). Third is to save the old-fashioned way through automatic monthly contributions to a low-risk savings vehicle like a money market mutual fund, high-interest savings account or GIC.

Anne-Marie and Peter's net worth is currently $70,000.

Homework

Anne-Marie and Peter will begin building an emergency fund through a TFSA, and develop a plan for their expected refund.

THE NAMES OF BOTH COUPLES HAVE BEEN CHANGED TO PROTECT THEIR PRIVACY.

Carolina and Jose

Carolina and Jose recap

- Location: Calgary
- Ages: 33 and 31
- Occupations: Stay-at-home mom and roofing
- Total household income: $55,000
- Life stage: Three daughters aged five, two and eight months
- Financial savvy: Medium to low — they recently established a budget, are frugal spenders, have no retirement savings, and are committed to paying off debt
- Top goals for 2014: Pay off debt, buy a house and visit family
- Homework from last month: Pay off Jose's student loan. Start saving through an RRSP and TFSA. Deal with "mommy guilt." Meet with a tax adviser

It has been an incredible month for Carolina and Jose, both financially and emotionally.

The couple stuck to their homework and main goal of paying off the remaining $500 of Jose's student loan. They did this by selling some of their furniture and electronics online. Carolina and Jose found it liberating to pay off the loan, and it further motivated them to become debt-free as quickly as possible.

You will recall that Carolina and Jose established their first budget one month ago and, so far, they have been successful in sticking to it. They are filing receipts in an accordion folder, reconciling those against their budget, and including a "where's our budget at" conversation in their weekly chores.

Emotionally, Carolina has found it much easier to shed her "mommy guilt," knowing that money has been allocated in their budget for her to use towards some small indulgences from time to time. She has even enrolled in a free weekly yoga class.

Jose is exploring higher paying job opportunities, and is also turning his photography hobby into extra income. The couple also sat down with a professional financial adviser to ensure they are taking advantage of all available tax benefits.

Even more exciting is they rustled up the courage to ask Jose's parents to give them a down payment so they can buy their first home. His parents said yes, and it appears Carolina and Jose's dream is becoming reality.

Over the next two months, Carolina and Jose will be meeting with Mike, my mortgage broker. He will lead them through the pre-approval process and the nitty-gritty financial details of owning a home.

Luckily, Carolina and Jose will be benefiting from historically low interest rates, meaning more of their mortgage payment will go towards the principal balance of the mortgage rather than the interest.

They will also be working with my trusted realtor and longtime friend, Carmelle. She will help Jose and Carolina figure out what kind of home, and what neighbourhood, they will be able to afford.

Carolina and Jose's net worth is currently -$31,300.

Homework

Carolina and Jose will develop a plan for their expected tax refund and also determine the value of home they can afford and begin shopping.

LESLEY-ANNE SCORGIE IS A COLUMNIST WITH METRO, FINANCIAL COACH AND BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF RICH BY THIRTY, AND RICH BY FORTY. HER NEWEST BOOK, WELL-HEELED, HITS SHELVES IN APRIL.

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Rolling up the sleeves of workplace attire

Strictly business or not. Self-expression gains ground but some traditions still rule

DAVID SINGH
life@metronews.ca

Professional hockey players are known for arriving at arenas looking dapper in their suits. But during the recent Olympics, broadcaster Don Cherry noted that players on Team USA were showing up in track jackets and sweat pants.

Like it or not, that's just a small example proving that the times are changing when it comes to traditional dress codes. So we decided to take a closer look at the thinking that goes into employers' policies on workplace attire.

The loose code

Sid Lee, a communications advertising agency in Toronto, takes pride in their "very casual" dress code. Whether it's jeans, plaid, baseball caps, or fresh sneakers, the company doesn't mind. Even tattoos are game.

"It's funny because it's actually odd in our business now not to see a few people brandishing tattoos openly," said Dustin Rideout, VP of strategy at Sid Lee. "I think it would be weird if we didn't see that."

Cramp someone's style

"I think either no one would show up or people would show up naked in protest."

Dustin Rideout, on what would happen if his workplace introduced a strict dress code.

Rideout says the company, which works closely with brands, looks at its employees as a cast of characters that make the company unique. And in their case, being unique is the goal.

"In our business, brands are always looking for ways to be unique or stand out, because there's just so much noise out there," he said. "Having people walk that talk, in their everyday life at Sid Lee, rather than something they just pay lip service to, is important in living that value."

But it's not like employees are just showing up in their pajamas. Rideout says there's an unspoken understanding that people need to dress to certain occasions or client situations, and the staff hired are "professional enough" to know the difference.

The traditional code

The Bank of Montreal relies on a different dress code. Ralph Marranca, director of media relations at BMO, prefers to call it "guidelines" that apply across the company's enterprise.

He says this typically includes suits, dress slacks and dress shirts for men and pant suits, dresses, skirts, blouses, sweaters or jackets for women.

Even tattoos are game in some offices with casual dress codes. ISTOCK

"We're a customer-focused organization," Marranca said. "The underlying principle is that we must maintain professional standards and present a professional image to our customers at all times."

He says employees are asked to use their common sense and apply the rule, "If you have to ask yourself if it's acceptable, then it probably isn't."

However, Marranca notes that BMO is open to its own kind of flexibility. In addition to casual Fridays, he uses the example of colourful bow ties instead of traditional neckties. Pocket squares are also increasingly common.

"We want to give employees some flexibility," he said. "Your clothing is sometimes an expression of yourself. How people dress expresses their personality. I think we are mindful of that."

But the bottom line Marranca stresses is that the company needs to maintain its guidelines simply because of its industry. "I think we do have to be mindful that there are certain expectations from our customers, (who have) an expectation of what is professional," he said.

After all, you probably wouldn't want your finances handled by someone wearing a baseball cap. Or would you?

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PHOT 222	Photoshop for Photographers	April 9
PHOT 114	Advanced Digital SLR Photography	April 10
PHOT 200	Basic Photography	April 14
CMPS 140	Software Development Methodologies	April 15

CODE	COURSE	START
PHOT 205	Intermediate Photography	April 15
PHOT 200	Basic Photography	April 16
CPNT 147	Intro to Scaling Networks (CCNA)	April 17
PHOT 205	Intermediate Photography	April 17
CMPP 197	Oracle 11g: Admin Workshop II	April 21
PHOT 200	Basic Photography	April 26
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Tablets and other mobile devices can be great tools for sales teams, but they're also vulnerable to theft and fraud. ISTOCK

How to keep your small business cybersafe

With the increasing use of mobile devices and the prominence of social media in our lives, cybercrime poses serious security risks, especially for small businesses.

"Being cybersafe is a practice that should be part of a company's regular operations," says Paul T. Ryan, chief technology officer for Yellow Pages Group, a company that provides digital media and marketing solutions to Canada's small businesses.

Ryan suggests implementing a few security measures for small businesses that are looking to protect themselves against cyberfraud:

• Tablets and smartphones because of their size, are a target for both theft and fraud. Always protect your devices with a password, frequently back-up your data, and install security, encryption, and locator apps to protect sensitive business information. Most importantly, don't access private information on free Wi-Fi networks, as they often aren't very secure.

• Cloud computing is great for data storage, as well as for marketing and sales, but this means that you're storing your data online, outside your business and sometimes outside the country. Protect yourself by using a service that allows you to encrypt information before uploading or sharing and by only giving access to a limited number of people in your organization. Don't forget to do your research before choosing a service provider: read their legal terms and make sure their service fits your security needs.

• Social media sites provide another marketing tool for small businesses to reach their potential customers, but they're also easy targets for hackers looking to get access to private business information. If you're using social media to promote your business, select only a small number of individuals who can post on your company's behalf. Also, it's important to use the site's privacy controls, ignore requests for sensitive business information and continue to be on the lookout for spam posts. NEWS CANADA

Smarten up with this bow-tie pasta and pesto

This recipe serves four. MIKE MCCOLL, FROM THE BEST OF ROSE REISMAN (WHITECAP BOOKS)

ROSE REISMAN
For more, visit rosereisman.com or follow her on twitter @rosereisman

FLASH FOOD

From your fridge to your table in 30 minutes or less

This is a wonderful and nutritious one-dish meal. You have your grains, vegetables and protein. I recommend using whole wheat pasta to boost your fibre and nutrients. You can always substitute the pasta for penne or rigatoni. The red bell pepper pesto is a real change from regular basil pesto. You can multiply the recipe and freeze for later use.

This is a very versatile dish that can use other proteins such as beef, seafood or tofu. Toast the pine nuts by placing in a hot skillet over medium-high heat and cooking for two minutes or until lightly browned. You can make up a batch and freeze for later use.

Pine nuts have one of the highest amounts of protein of any nuts as well as a notable amount of fibre.

Ingredients

- 8 oz boneless skinless chicken breast

Pesto
- 1 large red bell pepper, roasted, cut into quarters **
- 1 garlic clove
- 1/3 cup toasted pine nuts
- 1/3 cup chopped sundried tomatoes
- 1/2 cup fresh basil
- 1/4 cup fresh mint
- 1/3 cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 1/4 cup (60 mL) olive oil
- 1/4 cup (60 mL) low-sodium chicken stock
- Pinch of salt and pepper

Pasta
- 8 oz bow tie whole wheat pasta
- 1/2 cup chopped basil
- 1/2 cup sliced red bell peppers

Directions

1. Grill or sauté the chicken breast just until cooked or temperature reaches 165 F, about 4 minutes per side. Let cool, then slice thinly.

2. To make the pesto: Place the peppers, garlic, half the pine nuts, sundried tomatoes, basil, mint, half the Parmesan, oil, stock and salt and pepper in a food processor and purée until smooth. If too thick, add more stock.

3. Meanwhile cook the pasta until al dente, about 8 minutes.

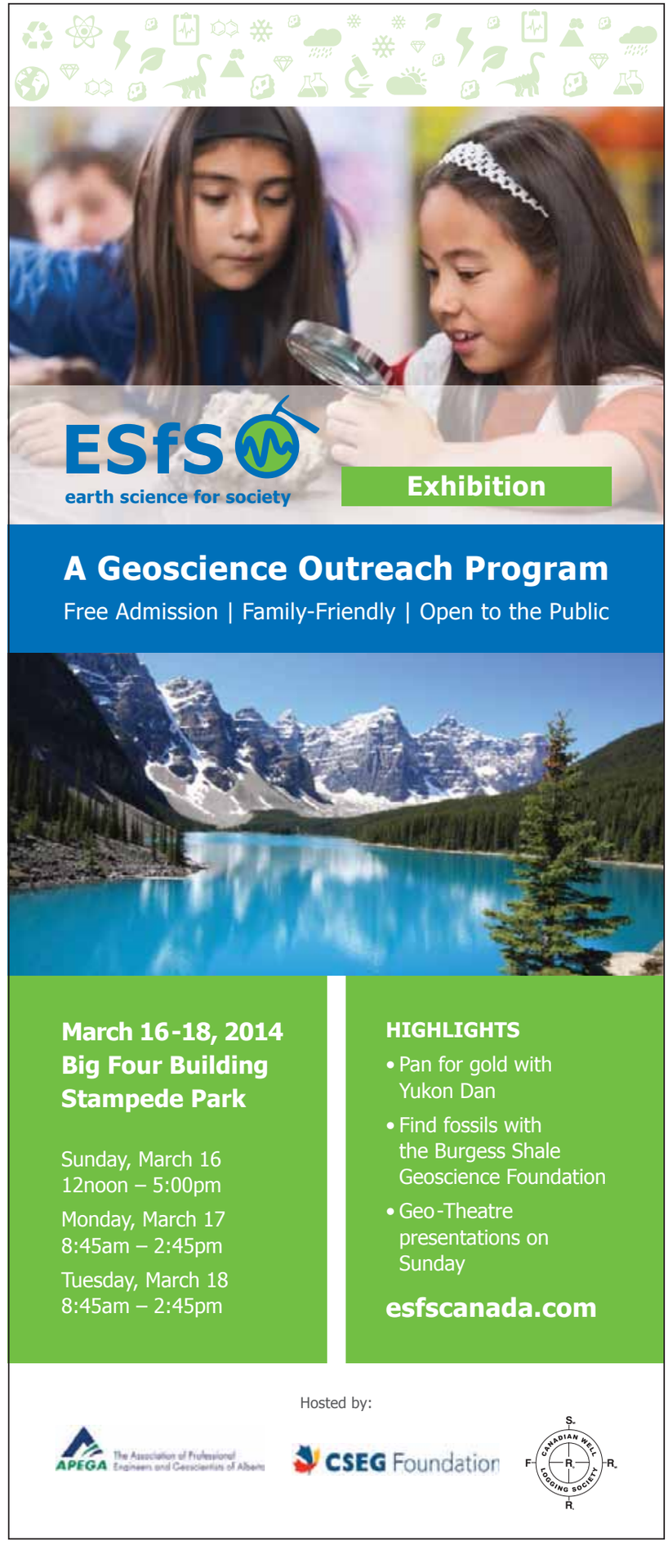
4. Add chicken and pesto to pasta and garnish with remaining pine nuts and Parmesan cheese, basil and bell pepper.

** To roast a red pepper, cut into quarters, remove the seeds and bake at 425 F for about 20 minutes, turning halfway. Remove the skin and slice. You can also buy roasted bell peppers in the supermarket packed in water.

THE BEST OF ROSE REISMAN (WHITECAP BOOKS) BY ROSE REISMAN

Nutritional information

- Calories 409
- Carbohydrates 47 g
- Fibre 5.8 g
- Protein 22.5 g
- Total fat 16.5 g
- Saturated fat 3.2 g
- Cholesterol 37 mg
- Sodium 414 mg



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Sochi 2014

Canada strikes its golden goal

Canada succeeded in attaining its lofty goal at the Sochi Paralympic Winter Games.

Two podium-topping performances on Sunday's final day of competition ensured the Canadian Paralympic Committee's benchmark of finishing in the top three in gold medals was met.

It didn't look all that likely heading into the weekend.

Canada picked up golds from para-alpine skier Mac Marcoux and the wheelchair curling team on Saturday.

Canada finished with seven gold, two silver and seven bronze, good for fourth overall in total medal count.

Russia topped the standings with an eye-popping 80 medals —including 30 gold — while Ukraine was second with 25 total medals.

A series of high-profile retirements after a 2010 Vancouver Paralympics that saw Canada win 19 medals, including 10 gold, gutted the team's podium experience, but a mix of veterans and youth stepped up in a big way. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Canadian fans cheer our wheelchair curling team to a gold-medal victory on Saturday. PAVEL GOLOVKIN/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Brian McKeever of Canada and guide Erik Carleton are awarded gold medals for their victory in Sochi, Russia, on Sunday. MARK KOLBE/GETTY IMAGES

Symphony on skis in Sochi

Paralympic Games. McKeever, Klebl find cross-country gold for Canada on final day

Brian McKeever and Chris Klebl made sure Canada finished the Sochi Paralympic Winter Games on a high note.

The cross-country skiers both won their races on Sunday, with McKeever taking the men's visually impaired 10-kilometre event before Klebl surprised the field with a stunning victory in the men's 10-kilometre sitting category.

McKeever picked up his third gold medal — and the 10th of his career — at these Games, while Klebl won his first-ever Paralympic medal.

McKeever finished Sunday's race in a time of 23 minutes 18.1 seconds, just 8.1 seconds ahead of Russia's Stanislav Chokhlaev.

He employed the same strategy with his guides that helped him win the 20-kilometre gold medal last week. With windy conditions starting to wear on guide Erik Carleton, Graham Nishikawa entered the race with about three kilometres to go to help seal the 10th gold medal of McKeever's storied career.

"It was all on the guides today. They did such a great job with all the headwind," said McKeever.

The 42-year-old Klebl won in a time of 30 minutes 52.0 seconds. Ukraine's Maksym Yarovyi finished second at 31:06.5 and Russia's Grigory Murygin skied to the bronze at 31:18.2.

"It feels pretty good for sure," said Klebl. "I have exceptional skis for wet, sloppy conditions and today we got exactly those conditions."

A three-time Paralympian, Klebl moved to Canmore, Alta., to join the Canadian team from the United States following the Vancouver 2010 Games.

Also Sunday, para-alpine sit-skier Josh Dueck was chosen as Canada's flag-bearer for the closing ceremony. The native of Kimberley, B.C., won gold in the super combined and silver in the downhill in Sochi.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

NHL. Leafs fail to launch in D.C. campaign stop

Washington linemates Joel Ward and Jason Chimera often play in the shadow of their higher-profile teammates.

On Sunday afternoon, they sparked the Capitals to a much-needed victory.

On a day when Alex Ovechkin was held to one shot on goal, the Capitals' third line scored twice in a three-goal first period and the Capitals held on for a 4-2 win over the Toronto Maple Leafs.

Ward had a goal and an assist and Chimera also tallied for Washington.

Grunt work

"I've counted on Wardo and Chimmer all year long. They play together — penalty kill, power play. Big bodies that we count on for a lot of minutes." Capitals coach Adam Oates

Dion Phaneuf had a goal and an assist for Toronto and Troy Bodie also scored.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NHL

Canucks hand Lu a loss in Florida

The Vancouver Canucks were not surprised that their game against former goalie Roberto Luongo came down to a shootout.

Nicklas Jensen scored in the first period and added the only goal in the shootout and the Canucks earned a 4-3 victory over Luongo and the Florida Panthers on Sunday.

Alex Burrows had a goal and two assists and Dan Hamhuis also scored for the Canucks. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Canada goalie. Szabados debuts in men's league

Shannon Szabados made 27 saves in her men's professional hockey league debut Saturday, although her Columbus Cottonmouths fell 4-3 to the Knoxville Ice Bears.

Szabados joined the Southern Professional Hockey League team last week. The 27-year-old goaltender from Edmonton backstopped the Canadian women's hockey team to Olympic gold Feb. 20.

Columbus led 2-1 after the opening period, but Knoxville scored three unanswered goals in the second before the Cottonmouths scored again in the third.

Shannon Szabados GETTY IMAGES

"It was fun," Szabados told the Columbus Ledger-Enquirer. "I saw a few Szabados shirts out there. It was definitely a great moment."

THE CANADIAN PRESS

4 SPORTS

Toronto Blue Jays starting pitcher Drew Hutchison delivers a warm-up pitch before an exhibition game against the Boston Red Sox in Dunedin, Fla., Friday. Hutchison is believed to have pitched his way into the Jays' starting rotation.
KATHY WILLENS/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Blue Jays manager tips his hand on pitching rotation

Spring training.
Gibbons implies fourth starting spot may have been filled by Happ

Manager John Gibbons offered a glimpse Sunday of the Blue Jays' much-debated pitching rotation.

He helped fill in some of the gaps when he said the pitching questions remaining are who will be the fifth starter and whether the team will carry seven or eight in the bullpen.

Previously GM Alex Anthopoulos had talked of two openings left to fill in a starting rotation that already features R.A. Dickey, Mark Buehrle and Brandon Morrow.

A gaggle of pitchers has been competing for the fourth and fifth sports with J.A. Happ, Drew Hutchison and Ricky Romero the leading contenders, although Happ's back issues had muddied the waters somewhat.

Asked Sunday if Happ was the fourth starter with one position still open, Gibbons replied, "Yeah, I'm a big Happ fan. I think he's going to have a heck of a year for us and all indications the other day are his back's fine. He threw very well (in a minor league game Friday). That was a big question.

"Now if his back flares up, that might be a different story."

Hutchison is widely believed to have already pitched his way into the rotation. In three outings this spring, the 23-year-old right-hander has given up three runs in 9 2/3 innings for an ERA of 2.79. He has struck out 16 and walked one.

Blue Jays 4, Orioles 3

Jonathan Diaz, taking off from second base, beat a throw to the plate to complete a 10th-inning Toronto comeback as the Blue Jays rallied to defeat the Baltimore Orioles 4-3 in Grapefruit League play Sunday.

- Toronto needed a run in the ninth and two in the 10th to stave off the Orioles, who led 2-1 going into the bottom of the ninth and then went ahead 3-2 in the 10th.

"He's been pitching great," Gibbons acknowledged. "Arguably the best of anybody in camp."

THE CANADIAN PRESS

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Horoscopes

♈ Aries
March 21 - April 20
The more you dwell on a matter that troubles you the more you will worry about it, so pull your mind away from the issue and focus on what makes you feel good.

♉ Taurus
April 21 - May 21
Your mind may be bubbling with great ideas but what are they worth if you don't do anything with them? If you want to get serious it will take more than just ideas – it will take commitment.

♊ Gemini
May 22 - June 21
If you get the chance to move up on the work front you must take it. Don't worry that you are not qualified for the job because enthusiasm is more important than experience – and that's something you'll gain as you go along.

♋ Cancer
June 22 - July 23
There is a reason for everything that happens in life and that fact won't change just because you can't work out what it might be. Your task today is to trust in yourself.

♌ Leo
July 24 - Aug. 23
Everyone makes mistakes, so don't beat yourself up just because you got something wrong. The important thing is that you recognize where you made an error and resolve not to make it again.

♍ Virgo
Aug. 24 - Sept. 23
You won't see eye-to-eye with someone today but that doesn't matter – in fact it's good. The world would be a boring place if everyone got along all the time.

♎ Libra
Sept. 24 - Oct. 23
You will change your mind about something today that you seemed so sure about yesterday. Not everyone will be happy about it but that's not your concern.

♏ Scorpio
Oct. 24 - Nov. 22
You may be fixed in your opinions but you are not the only one with strong beliefs. Disagreements are likely this week but that's okay. New ideas may create tension but tension itself can be creative.

♐ Sagittarius
Nov. 23 - Dec. 21
Mercury, planet of communication, moves into the domestic area of your chart today, so an exchange of ideas, and feelings, with partners and loved ones will be of benefit to you all.

♑ Capricorn
Dec. 22 - Jan. 20
A social event could lead to a new career opportunity. Knowledge and experience are always important but if it comes down to a tie-break between you and a rival it's who you know that will count.

♒ Aquarius
Jan. 21 - Feb. 19
Don't let anyone pressure you into doing something you're uneasy about. That applies to all areas of your life but especially to money matters.

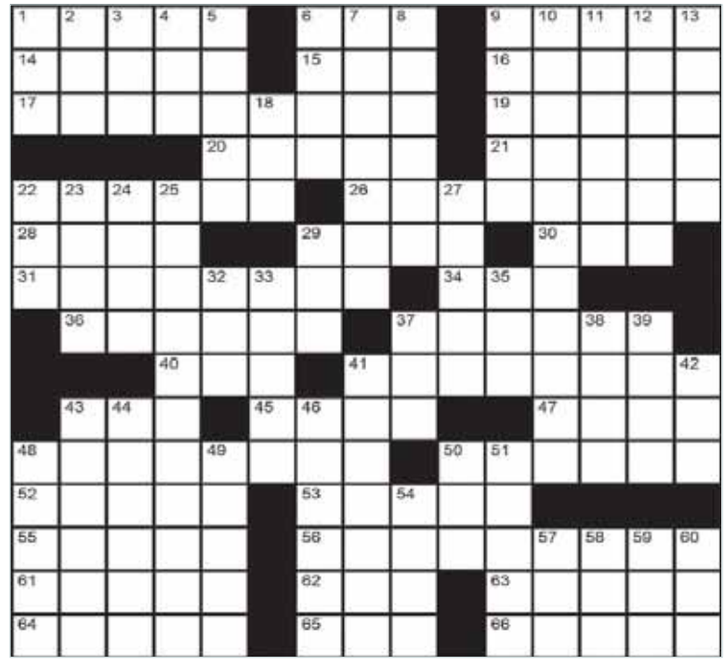
♓ Pisces
Feb. 20 - March 20
Now is the time to be ruthlessly honest. If you have things to say you must let everyone know what is on your mind. If you don't speak up now you'll be sorry about it later on.

SALLY BROMPTON

Crossword: Canada Across and Down

See today's answers at metronews.ca/answers.

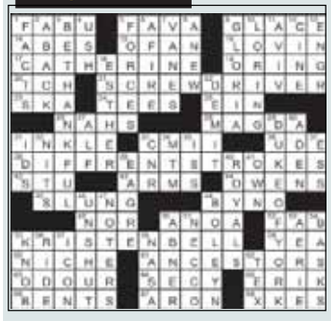
BY KELLY ANN BUCHANAN



Across
1. March 17th's star, St. __
6. Sci-Fi beings
9. __ Boson, 'The God Particle'
14. Overhead
15. "The Simpsons" bartender
16. Informed
17. George Bernard Shaw play
19. Energize
20. Curls
21. Hightails it
22. Viewing
26. Dublin band that performed "All I Want" on "American Idol" recently
28. House's locale, briefly
29. Wax: French
30. Ontario's Erie, et al.
31. Rabbit-in-a-hat routine: 2 wds.
34. Modern
36. Van Morrison song covered by Colin James: "Into the __"
37. Ms. McCartney
40. Fooled
41. Community in Manitoba southwest of Winnipeg
43. John Fogerty's gr.
45. Writer Ms. LeShan's
47. __-dokie
48. 1983 U2 album: 'Under a __ __ Sky'
50. Too: 2 wds.
52. Metamorphosis-izer
53. Fashion designer, Geoffrey __ (b.1924 - d.2004)
55. Liv Tyler's role in 'Lord of the Rings' movies
56. W.B. Yeats poem, Sailing to __
61. Avoid, as an issue
62. 'Speed' suffix
63. Backs
64. Keyed up
65. That, in Spanish
66. Sequence of wins in sports

Down
1. Tabloid's photos-supplier
2. 'Lull' ending
3. Chien: English
4. Pet doc's deg.
5. Pine
6. Actor Mr. Jannings
7. Wrench spot: 2 wds.
8. Security system device
9. __ __ dozen (Bakery order)
10. Early U2 song: 3 wds.
11. __ __ one's all (Really tried)
12. Shades of Shamrocks
13. Feel
18. Register
22. "I Am __" (2001)
23. Cheese type
24. Irritable
25. "The Unicorn" by Canadian folk group The __ __
27. Al __, as per pasta
29. Nero's 300
32. Windy City bus and train org.
33. Someone supportive
35. Poet's 'always'
37. 2008 VP candidate ...her initials-sharers
38. Do a thumbs up thing on Facebook
39. Blue dye
41. "__ __, crooked crosses, in God's country." - U2, "In God's Country"
42. Hairstyling product
43. Bobby __ (Hockey Hall of Famer born in Flin Flon, MB)
44. Animal Planet host Jeff
46. Singer/actress Ms. Reynolds
48. Super fun time
49. The Divine Comedy writer
50. Actress Ms. Ortiz
51. Propels
54. Mr. Pound of poetry
57. Haul
58. Dublin, __.
59. "What's the __?"
60. Chart

Friday's Crossword



Sudoku

How to play
Fill in the grid, so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1-9. There is no math involved.

3								2
	9		3	7	8		6	
	7						3	
		2	1		3	7		
	3						8	
		1	7		6	5		
	4						5	
	6		4	5	1		9	
8								6

Friday's Sudoku

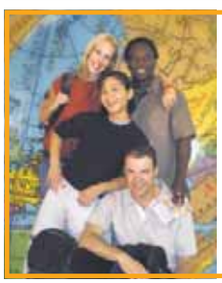
1	9	4	2	8	6	5	7	3
5	3	2	1	9	7	4	6	8
6	8	7	3	5	4	1	9	2
9	2	5	6	1	3	8	4	7
7	6	3	8	4	9	2	5	1
4	1	8	5	7	2	6	3	9
8	7	9	4	6	1	3	2	5
3	4	1	9	2	5	7	8	6
2	5	6	7	3	8	9	1	4

Weather

TODAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY
MAX: 3° MIN: -1°	MAX: 4° MIN: -4°	MAX: 7° MIN: -8°

BT BREAKFAST TELEVISION

ANDREW SCHULTZ
METEOROLOGIST
"I get to spread the word on how your day, evening or weekend will shape up with our ever-changing weather here in Alberta".
WEEKDAYS 5:30 AM



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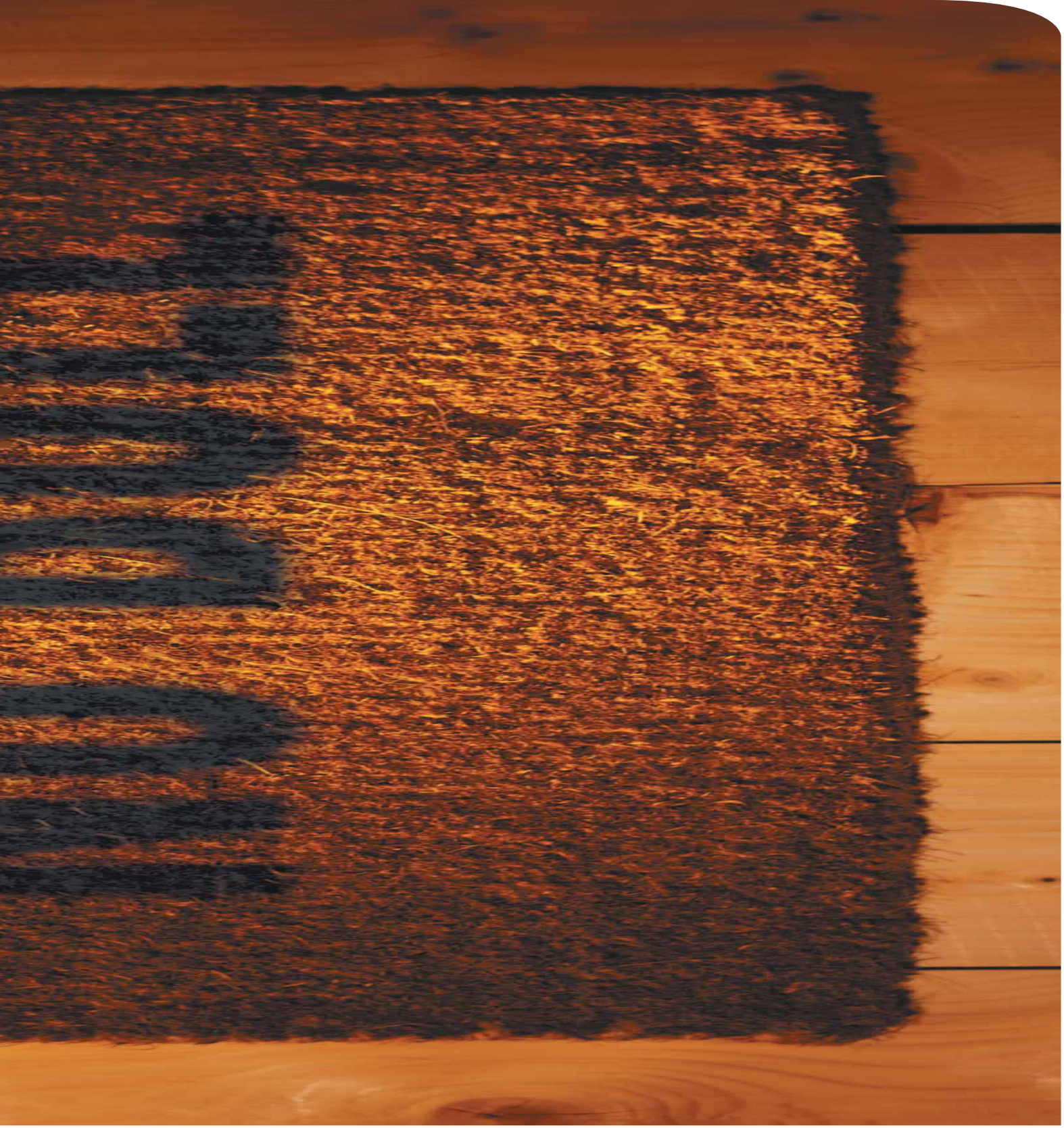
Who thinks honesty is the best policy?



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